



National Fire Plan

2004 Annual Awards

Whiskey South Forest Stewardship Project

The Whiskey South Forest Stewardship Project is a large, multi-year, multi-faceted project integrating forest stewardship, community fire protection, and hazardous fuels reduction near the community of Elk City in central Idaho. After assessing the hazards and risks of wildfire for this mountain community, the BLM worked closely with community leaders, the Forest Service, and other stakeholders in designing this project, which treats over 800 acres of forested land on the southwest edge of the community. In addition to fuels reduction and community fire protection, the project has major components of forest health, insect damage, elk habitat, and fisheries restoration; it was also designed to provide local economic support.

The project has overwhelming community support. The Whiskey South Planning Team, established by the BLM in response to the Healthy Forests Act, led the way in developing this end-results stewardship contract, including conducting contractor education workshops in Grangeville and Post Falls, Idaho, to help contractors understand both the new forest stewardship contracting initiative and end-results contracting. The team received outstanding support from Susan Giannettino, Deputy State Director of Resources and Jack Peterson, Stewardship and Healthy Forests Initiative Coordinator.

Planning for the Whiskey South hazardous fuels and forest health improvement project began in 2002, when the forests around Elk City suffered an unprecedented outbreak of mountain pine beetles. The BLM's role in protecting Elk City from potentially catastrophic wildfire was immediately apparent; the community sits within a township of BLM-managed lands that's surrounded by National Forest land. The Whiskey South project took on new life with the Omnibus Appropriations Act of 2003, which allowed the BLM to enter into stewardship contracts utilizing byproducts of forest restoration and fuels reduction to conduct work that would otherwise require significant investment of appropriated dollars to accomplish.

In August 2004, a competitive end-results stewardship contract was awarded to local employer Bennett Forest Industries, who is partnering with Three Rivers Timber, Inc. of Kamiah, Idaho. The contractor has made significant progress toward treatments, including trading over \$600,000 in forest products for equal amounts of service work. This project will create 50 new jobs in the community, which has suffered from a lack of family-wage jobs since the decline in the timber industry.

The Whiskey South Forest Stewardship Project will generate over 21,000 tons of biomass for an existing biofuels cogeneration unit at Bennett Forest Industries' Elk City mill and a new biofuels cogeneration unit in Grangeville. The state-of-the-art Grangeville facility design includes small- and large-diameter mills in addition to the existing planing mill, and will include a biofuels cogeneration unit. The new facility will replace the existing 1950s-era mill this year.

The Whiskey South project was a major factor in BFI's decision to invest in a new mill, which will stimulate economic well-being in this community. The project will also generate over 11,000 tons of small-diameter wood, called "hew wood," which is excellent feed stock for the latest single-pass log processing machines.